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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 003886

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TAGS: [IZ](#) [MCAP](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: PROVINCIAL OPERATIONS CENTERS CHANGING THE PREMISE
OF PIC

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Classified By: Pol-Mil Counselor Marcie Ries for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)
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[¶1.](#) (C) On October 29, Karbala became the eighth province to transfer from Coalition to Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC) in a two-hour ceremony that was intended to symbolize Iraq's growing stability and progress. The transfer ceremony was slightly different this time, however; when MND-C Commander MG Rick Lynch signed the document handing over provincial security responsibility, he did not transfer security responsibility to co-signer and Karbala Governor Aqeel al Khazali. Instead, as outlined in the document, security authority went to the Karbala Operations Center (KOC) Commander BG Qasim Nazal, from the 9th Armored Division. The presence of this federally-mandated provincial operations center opens the door for a new interpretation of "Provincial Iraqi Control" (PIC) and is the latest move by the central government to assert more authority over the provinces.

Operations Centers Establishing Federal Control of Provinces

[¶2.](#) (C) Operations centers serve as the commanding body for all security operations within the province where the local police force cannot independently maintain security; they also bypass provincial authorities. Iraqi Army and National Police assistance to fledgling local police forces (IP) is not new in Iraq; many IPs still lack equipment, training, and personal distance from local disturbances to adequately maintain local security. Normally, the Provincial Director of Police (PDOP) maintains operational control over his IPs while answering to the governor and coordinating operations through the Provincial Joint Coordination Center (PJCC). The existence of federally-mandated operations centers, however, sidelines the PDOP, the provincial governor, and the JPCC. The ops centers are commanded by an Army Commander who reports up the Ministry of Defense chain of command to the Office of the Prime Minister, placing provincial security in the hands of the central government rather than the provincial government. In more accurate terms, Karbala transfers to 'federal Iraqi Control' with the Karbala Operations Center, rather than 'Provincial Iraqi Control' with the governor and PDOP.

Karbala Operations Center

[¶3.](#) (C) Prime Minister Maliki established the Karbala Operations Center (KOC) by Prime Ministerial Directive (#34) on June 6, 2007 to respond to local instability from

intra-Shia fighting and a lack of enough reliable police to protect Karbala's fluctuating population. (Note: Karbala's local police are taxed by an upwards of a million pilgrims visiting the Holy Shrines on religious holidays and criminal elements infiltrating across Karbala's shared borders with the volatile Al Anbar and Babil provinces. End Note.) In late August, the Karbala police, largely made up of Badr members and affiliates, violently clashed with Jaish al Mahdi (JAM) when the militia group attempted to overrun a shrine. Over the ensuing hours, the KOC played a role in mobilizing Iraqi Army reinforcements that helped to effectively alleviate the conflict and eventually coordinated arrest operations against many of the culprits. While this outburst delayed PIC for two months, it also proved that the operations centers could help temper crisis situations.

14. (C) Similar to operations centers in other provinces, the KOC has operational control over the Iraqi Police (IPS), the Facilities Protection Service (FPS), the Iraqi Army (IA) units and Department of Border Enforcement (DBE) deployed to the province, and the provincial intelligence and security centers. The KOC also has taken over many of the functions of the PJCC which, under normal circumstances, assists the governor in coordinating security operations and sends regular reports to the National Operations Center (NOC).

Operations Centers: The Standard Rather Than the Exception

15. (C) These operations centers currently function in Baghdad, Diyala, Karbala, and Basrah provinces, and Samarra city in Salah Ad Din province, and there are indications that they will become the norm rather than the exception. At the

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